



The Beacon

A Newsletter for Nursing Home Residents

May 2020

The NJ Office of the Long-Term Care Ombudsman is an independent state agency whose sole mission is to advocate for the rights of residents of long-term care facilities.

Our staff and volunteers are trained to help you receive the best quality of care and quality of life you deserve. They are here to listen to your concerns and to work with you to solve any problems you may be having.

If you have a concern or complaint about your care or if you believe your rights are being violated, you can contact us at **1-877-582-6995**. Calls are confidential, at your request.

Normally, when you call us, we would make an unannounced visit to the facility to see you. However, due to the COVID-19 pandemic, we are not currently entering long-term care facilities. However, if you call us, we will reach out to the facility by phone and we will investigate your problem and try to solve it.

COVID-19: How it affects your rights

Long-term care facilities have been allowed to roll back some residents' rights to protect residents from COVID-19. Some of these changes include:

- allowing residents to be moved to other rooms or other facilities without advance notice
- limiting outside visitors, including family members, except in end-of-life situations
- enforcing strict social distancing rules, including restricting people to their rooms and closing down common areas, like dining rooms

It is important to remember that you still have rights during this difficult time. You have the right:

- to be notified about COVID-19 cases in your facility
- to communicate regularly with family and friends
- to have the staff help you communicate with family and friends via telephone, tablet, Skype, Facetime etc. or by visiting through a window to the outside
- to know your medical condition, including COVID-19 status, and to be sent to the hospital if your condition requires it
- to have your care needs met and call bells answered in a timely way

If you have concerns that your facility is not taking precautions to keep residents safe, is not providing good quality care, or is not respecting residents' rights during this time, please call us at 1-877-582-6995.

Stimulus Money from the Federal Government

Most nursing home residents should receive a COVID-19 stimulus payment made under the CARES Act. For most people the payment is \$1200 and is direct deposited into your checking or savings account.



The nursing facility should **not** keep your stimulus funds for its use.

Your stimulus money is **not** considered income and will **not** be counted as a resource for one year.

If the nursing home controls your bank account and your stimulus payment was direct deposited, it should:

- tell you when your stimulus money has been deposited/received
- promptly make this money available to you to spend, either through your PNA account or other accessible means

If you think your stimulus money was direct deposited into an account that the nursing home controls and you have not received it, please call our office.

To contact our office:

- call us at **1-877-582-6995**;
- email us at **Ombudsman@ltco.nj.gov**; or
- send us a fax at **609-943-3479**.

You can also ask your facility staff if there is a Volunteer Advocate from our office and what their contact information is.

We will continue to represent your interests and work to ensure quality care remains a primary focus during this difficult time.

New Jersey Office of the Long-Term Care Ombudsman
www.NJ.GOV/LTCO Laurie Brewer, LTC Ombudsman

